

## V-shaped recovery highly unlikely for Malaysia



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by **ASILA JALIL** / pic credit: [isis.org.my](#)

MALAYSIA'S economic outlook is expected to improve this year, but it may not see a V-shaped recovery even after the initiation of the Covid-19 vaccination programme which is slated to roll out by the end of this month.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia economics, trade and regional integration division fellow Dr Juita Mohamad (*picture*) said there are challenges the nation may face with the programme relating to those who oppose the vaccination and its effectiveness.

As the vaccine will be rolled out in three phases, Juita said problems may arise for the programme to reach those in rural and under developed areas, and that would make it difficult for the government to hit its aim of vaccinating 80% of the population.

"We need more frontliners to be on the ground and because of the nature of Malaysia's geographic standing, such as the urban versus the rural area, outreach would be a bit difficult," Juita said.

She added that there are also issues pertaining to the "non-believers" and anti-vaxxers along with certain groups that are questioning the halal status of this vaccine.

"We might not see such a smooth acceptance of the vaccination programme. A V-shaped recovery, in my opinion, is highly unlikely, but it would be better than last year," she said in a webinar titled "Covid-19 and Efforts for Economic Recovery Insights from Asean and Canada" organised by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Indonesia yesterday. ↑

Previously, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar had said Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin will be the first recipient of the Pfizer Inc vaccine.

The first phase of the programme, which will be from February to April, is for frontliners who have been directly involved in the fight against the coronavirus.

This will be followed by the second phase from April to August, which is for individuals in the high-risk group, namely senior citizens aged 60 and above, as well as those who are vulnerable to health complications and persons with disabilities.

The third phase will be from May to February 2022 for individuals aged 18 and above.

Khairy also said the vaccines procured by Malaysia are safe and effective, and do not contain microchips that will “take over people’s minds”.

Meanwhile, CSIS Indonesia department of economics senior researcher Dr Fajar Hirawan said the economic recovery in the Asean region is not solely dependent on the vaccination programme, but economic stimulus measures also play a role in facilitating recovery.

“Technology should also play a significant role to accommodate these kinds of challenges or limitations.

“I believe in any country, we are trying to focus on how to improve micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) but there is a digital divide,” he said.

To overcome concerns on digital divide as the pandemic has accelerated the shift to digitalisation, Fajar said there needs to be sufficient physical infrastructure that could enable the general public to optimise Internet usage.

Responding to digital inclusivity, Juita said the local governments also need to play a leading role in ensuring there is available financing for the upskilling and training of MSMEs along with investments to increase connectivity.

“Digital trade should bring benefits to all especially the MSME community. We know that Asean and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are aware of this situation and I think there are many efforts that are being made.

“In RCEP, there is a special provision on MSMEs and I think we are going towards the right direction to promote less inequality and more inclusiveness in our free trade pacts,” she added.



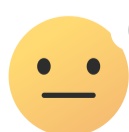
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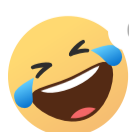
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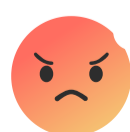
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